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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT MONTEVIDEO 6849
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0853
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 002086

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TAGS: PGOV PREL AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: WIDE MARGIN PREDICTED FOR FIRST LADY'S PRESIDENTIAL WIN

REF: BUENOS AIRES 02015

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: With less than one week before the October 28 presidential elections in Argentina, First Lady Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) has a commanding lead, according to ten local polls published on October 21. Senator Kirchner seems poised to win by a large margin over the range of opposition candidates, with analysts predicting a first round win. Center-left candidate Elisa Carrio is in second place, followed by former Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna. In what is likely to be the last round of published polls before the election, all ten polls indicated that the undecided vote has dropped from above 20% to between 10% to 15%. The opposition appears to be the main beneficiary of this drop, but not enough to change the predictions of the outcomes on election day. END SUMMARY.

Polls Indicate First Round Win for Kirchner

¶12. (SBU) With less than one week before the October 28 presidential elections in Argentina, First Lady Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) remains the front-runner, according to ten independent polls published on October 21. In the ten polls published October 21, an average of 42.7% of those surveyed said they would vote for CFK. Based on these polls, CFK is currently expected to win on Sunday with over 40% and a margin of about 20 percentage points over the second place candidate. (By Argentine law, a candidate may win in the first round with 45% of the votes, or 40% with a margin of at least 10 percentage points over the next candidate. If neither of these conditions is met, a run-off would be held on November 25.) Of the 13 other presidential candidates, CFK's closest competitor is center-left candidate Elisa Carrio, who averages about 16.5% in the ten independent polls. In third place is former Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna with an average of 12.1%, and in fourth place is San Luis Governor and dissident Peronist candidate Alberto Rodriguez Saa with an average of 6.3%. Trailing behind them are center-right candidates Ricardo Lopez Murphy and Neuquen Governor Jorge Sobisch, with the rest of the pack showing negligible support.

¶13. (SBU) CFK seems to be strongest outside of major cities, including in the poorer suburbs of Buenos Aires. She is most

popular among young voters (between 18 and 25 years old), party loyalists, and voters with only an elementary school education. Polling firm Poliarquia estimates that only 26.1% of university educated voters support CFK. Carrio's base is said to be among women and university-educated voters. CFK's numbers in major urban centers suggest that she does not have the support of the urban middle class. According to Poliarquia, Senator Kirchner and Carrio register a technical tie in the capital city of Buenos Aires, with 19.7% for the Senator and 18.9% for Carrio. The Open Interamerican University's (Universidad Abierta Interamericana) polls show similar results in Cordoba (21.2 for Kirchner, 14.6 for Carrio, and 23.5 for Lavagna) and Rosario (28.2 for Kirchner and 32 for Carrio).

Undecided Leaning Toward Opposition

¶4. (SBU) In what is likely to be the last round of published polls before the election, all ten polls indicated that the undecided vote has dropped from above 20% to between 10 to 15%. According to Poliarquia, only 1.1% of this drop has translated into a gain for CFK, while an 8.3% gain was shared among the main opposition candidates. Carrio's numbers rose 2.8 percentage points, Lavagna's 2.9, and Rodriguez Saa's 2.2. Also according to Poliarquia, 80% of Senator Kirchner's voters are firm in their support, while Carrio's are 56.7% committed, Rodriguez Saa's are 66.9% committed, and Lavagna's are 53.1% committed. The polls indicate that, one week before the election, there is still a significant number of undecided voters (anywhere from 8% to 17.3%).

Comment

¶5. (C) Opposition candidates have gained slightly from the drop in undecided votes indicated in the latest poll results, but not enough to change the expected outcome on October 28. The polls are virtually unanimous in projecting a first-round victory for CFK and the rank order of the "major" candidates behind her: Carrio, Lavagna, Rodriguez Saa, and Lopez Murphy, followed by the nine others. Local pollsters here are not expecting any surprises on election day, and their unanimity on the likely outcome engenders confidence in their predictions.

WAYNE